

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**State superintendent hopefuls to discuss ideas for educational policy
at NC Early Childhood Foundation event**

Raleigh, NC – Five confirmed 2020 Democratic candidates for NC State Superintendent and two potential Republican candidates will discuss education policy as part of an upcoming panel discussion hosted by the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF).

Democratic superintendent candidates who will participate in the panel discussion include

- Former Chapel Hill-Carrboro school board member James Barrett;
- Constance Lav Johnson, publisher of *CityPolitical Magazine* and a former teacher and school administrator;
- Michael Maher, president of the North Carolina Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators and vice chairman of the North Carolina Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission;
- Jennifer Mangrum, a former teacher and school administrator who now teaches, advises and coordinates teacher education programs as an associate professor at the UNC Greensboro;
- Keith Sutton, a member of the Wake County Board of Education and founder of FocusED, LLC, a firm that supports organizations in the improvement and transformation of education.

Republicans Catherine Truitt, Chancellor of Western Governors University, and NC Representative Craig Horn will also serve as panelists. Both Horn and Truitt have confirmed they are considering a run for the superintendent's office but have not declared their candidacy. Mark Johnson, the current superintendent, has announced that he will run for Lieutenant Governor in 2020. The discussion will be moderated by Susan Scott, Chief Growth Officer at UNC-TV/ Public Media.

The panel discussion is part of a stakeholder meeting for NCECF's North Carolina Pathways to Grade-Level Reading (Pathways) initiative, which takes a whole-child, equity-based approach to improving third-grade reading proficiency in North Carolina. Pathways is an initiative of NCECF in collaboration with NC Child, The North Carolina Partnership for Children and BEST NC. The event will take place on the campus of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) in Durham.

Event attendees will include state and local early childhood leaders from the health, education and family support sectors who have been involved in the Pathways initiative, which identifies child health, education and family support data measures to track to ensure that young children are being supported in their learning and development.

Hundreds of stakeholders from across the state have worked together to create the [Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Action Framework](#), which lifts up strategies intentionally designed to reduce barriers to opportunity that are preventing North Carolina's children from learning to read—like reducing suspensions and expulsions in the early grades, hiring more teachers of color and increasing access to early intervention services. Panelists will discuss their ideas about how to move forward on the Pre-K to third grade education system recommendations from the Pathways framework.

"We are delighted to have these esteemed guests, who are already leaders in the field of education and who have the potential to make substantial, meaningful change at a statewide level as superintendent, join us to share their thoughts and ideas about how to use the Pathways framework to help each child in North Carolina succeed," said NCECF Executive Director Muffy Grant.

Just a few of the action steps recommended in the Pathways framework include

- Develop a state plan to recruit and retain birth-through-age-eight educators and school leaders of color using a variety of strategies, including financial incentives, recruitment legislation, recruitment centers, pre-college programs, and alternative certification programs targeting substitute teachers and mid-career paraprofessionals.
- Create professional development opportunities for birth-through-third grade teachers, and for child care center directors and principals, to learn together.
- Adapt the K-3 school funding system to increase equity by using a weighted funding formula that takes into account the extra costs in districts with high numbers of low-income students or students with special needs to ensure that those with the most barriers to success have the most supports.

In addition to the panel discussion, the event will include updates on Pathways work for initiative stakeholders and a policy update on children's social emotional health and family engagement.

Read-a-roo, the UNC-TV Rootle mascot, will stop by at lunch.

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About the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF): As the state's only organization focused exclusively on children from birth through age eight, the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation works to promote understanding, spearhead collaboration and advance policies to ensure each North Carolina child is on track for lifelong success by the end of third grade.